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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/803,494	03/18/2004	Bruce Neace	BLN 4328 (BLN-026541)	5683

321 7590 03/31/2006

SENNIGER POWERS  
ONE METROPOLITAN SQUARE  
16TH FLOOR  
ST LOUIS, MO 63102

EXAMINER

CHANDRAN, BIJU INDIRA

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2835

DATE MAILED: 03/31/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

H.A

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

10/803,494

Applicant(s)

NEACE, BRUCE

Examiner

Biju Chandran

Art Unit

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**-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --****Period for Reply**

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 23 September 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**.                      2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-41 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 39-41 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-36 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 37 and 38 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119**

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a) ☐ All    b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

**Attachment(s)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)   | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)  | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)             |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>6/16/04, 9/23/04</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

Items 13-21 of the information disclosure statement filed on 06/16/04 fails to comply with the provisions of 37 CFR 1.97, 1.98 and MPEP § 609 because they are photographs from undated documents. It has been placed in the application file, but the information referred to therein has not been considered as to the merits. Applicant is advised that the date of any re-submission of any item of information contained in this information disclosure statement or the submission of any missing element(s) will be the date of submission for purposes of determining compliance with the requirements based on the time of filing the statement, including all certification requirements for statements under 37 CFR 1.97(e). See MPEP § 609.05(a).

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

1. Claims 14-17, 20-29 and 32-35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Hammerly (US 2.905,923).
  - Regarding claims 14 and 26, Hammerly discloses a neutral-ground body subassembly (figure 2) for use in a socket assembly for mounting an electric meter (column 1, lines 15-24), said subassembly comprising a base (9) having a bottom (12) for supporting at least one neutral conductor (7) of a power line system, a neutral-ground connector (made up of elements 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22) comprising a body (12,

16, 17, 18, 19) of electrically conductive material (column 1, lines 52-54) engageable with the base to mount the body on the base in a position in which a first face (bottom face in contact with the base in figure 3) of the body faces toward the bottom of the base and a second face of the body opposite the first face faces away from the bottom of the base, a first screw opening (opening of screw 29) through said body extending from the first face of the body to the second face of the body, a hole in the body (hole in 19) for receiving a ground conductor (6) of the socket assembly, and a second screw opening (opening 13a mating with hole on 19) intersecting said hole in the body (see figure 3), a first screw (29) threadable in said first screw opening to a position in which the screw is adapted to contact said at least one neutral conductor on the bottom of the base, and a second screw (20) threadable in said second screw opening to a position in which the second screw is adapted to contact said ground conductor (6).

- Regarding claims 15 and 27, Hammerly further discloses that said ground conductor hole in the body extends from a first end of the body inward into the body generally parallel to the first and second faces of the body, and wherein said second screw opening extends from the second face of the body toward the first face of the body and intersects said ground conductor hole.

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- Regarding claims 16 and 28, Hammerly further discloses that said base has opposing legs (11) extending up from the bottom of the base, and wherein said body has opposite sides slidably engageable with respective legs of the base (column 2, lines 42-49).
- Regarding claim 17 and 29, Hammerly further discloses that said opposite sides of the body have tongue and groove sliding connections with respective legs of the base (see figure 3).
- Regarding claim 20, Hammerly further discloses that the said base is an elongate extruded metal part (column 1, lines 50-52) generally U-shaped in transverse section, said base having opposing legs (11) extending from the bottom of the base, said the legs of the base having opposing inner surfaces formed with grooves (figure 3).
- Regarding claim 21, Hammerly further discloses that the said body is an elongate extruded metal part (column 1, lines 52-54), and wherein the body has sides formed with tongues slidably receivable in the grooves in the legs of the base (figure 3).
- Regarding claims 22 and 32, Hammerly further discloses that the base is generally L-shaped (c-section in figure 4) and said connector body is generally L-shaped (a straight c-section along direction 4 shown in figure 4, through '19' will show the L-shaped c-section with '19' forming one leg and '18' forming the other).

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- Regarding claims 23 and 33, Hammerly further discloses that the said base has a first leg (horizontal part in figure 4) forming the bottom of the base and a second leg (vertical part) extending from the first leg, and wherein the connector body has a first leg (horizontal part of body in figure 4, i.e. c-section of '18') spaced from and opposing the first leg of the base and a second leg (c-section of '18') spaced from and opposing the second leg of the base, said first and second legs of the base and the first and second legs of the connector body defining a cavity for receiving said neutral conductor.
- Regarding claims 24 and 34, Hammerly further discloses that the second leg of the base has a sliding connection with the first leg of the connector body (column 2, lines 60-65; figure 4).
- Regarding claims 25 and 35, Hammerly further discloses that the hole for receiving said ground conductor is located in the first leg of the connector body.

### ***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

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2. Claims 18, 19, 30 and 31 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hammerly.

- Regarding claim 18 and 30, Hammerly does not explicitly disclose that the second screw is smaller in diameter than the first screw. If in fact the second screw of Hammerly is not smaller than the first screw, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to chose the diameter of the first screw to be of any value, even bigger than the second screw, by routine experimentation to securely restrain the wires.
- Regarding claims 19 and 31, Hammerly does not explicitly disclose that the second screw has a diameter substantially equal to the diameter of the ground conductor hole in the body. However, if these diameters are not in fact substantially the same, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to choose any value for the screw and hole diameter, even the same, by routine experimentation to securely restrain the wire.

3. Claims 1-13, and 36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Spencer et al. (US 3,076,167) in view of Hammerly.

- Regarding claim 1, Spencer et al. disclose a socket assembly (10) for mounting an electric meter in a meter box, comprising a plurality of power line connector subassemblies (32, 34) for connecting electric

power conductors of a power line system (column 2, lines 65-71) to the socket assembly, a plurality of socket connectors (44, 46) for receiving mating connectors of the electric meter (column 3, lines 5-10), and a neutral-ground connector (29) subassembly. Spencer et al. does not disclose any of the details of the neutral ground connector subassembly. Hammerly discloses a connector assembly with a neutral-ground connector sub assembly (figure 2) comprising a base (9) having a bottom (12) for supporting at least one neutral conductor (7) of said power line system, a neutral-ground connector (made up of 13, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 22) comprising a body (13, 16, 17, 18 and 19) engageable with the base to mount the body on the base in a position in which a first face (bottom face of body contacting the base in figure 3) of the body faces toward the bottom of the base and a second face of the body opposite the first face faces away from the bottom of the base, a first screw opening (opening of screw '29') through said body extending from the first face of the body to the second face of the body, a hole in the body (hole on '19') for receiving a ground conductor (6) of the socket assembly, and a second screw opening (hole on 13a and 19) intersecting said hole in the body (see figure 3), a first screw (29) threadable in said first screw opening to a position in which the screw is adapted to contact said at least one neutral conductor on the bottom of the base, and a second screw (20) threadable in said second



screw opening to a position in which the second screw is adapted to contact said ground conductor (6). At the time of the invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the neutral-ground connector sub assembly taught by Hammerly in the socket assembly disclosed by Spencer et al. to provide an inexpensive means of providing a common junction point for multiple ground or neutral wires (Hammerly, column 1, lines 15-40).

- Regarding claim 2, Hammerly further discloses that said ground conductor hole in the body extends from a first end of the body inward into the body generally parallel to the first and second faces of the body, and wherein said second screw opening extends from the second face of the body toward the first face of the body and intersects said ground conductor hole.
- Regarding claim 3, Hammerly further discloses that said base has opposing legs (11) extending up from the bottom of the base, and wherein said body has opposite sides slidably engageable with respective legs of the base (column 2, lines 42-49).
- Regarding claim 4, Hammerly further discloses that said opposite sides of the body have tongue and groove sliding connections with respective legs of the base (see figure 3).
- Regarding claim 5, Hammerly does not explicitly disclose that the second screw is smaller in diameter than the first screw. If in fact the

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second screw of Hammerly is not smaller than the first screw, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to chose the diameter of the first screw to be of any value, even bigger than the second screw, by routine experimentation to securely restrain the wires.

- Regarding claim 6, Hammerly does not explicitly disclose that the second screw has a diameter substantially equal to the diameter of the ground conductor hole in the body. However, if these diameters are not in fact substantially the same, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to choose any value for the screw and hole diameter, even the same, by routine experimentation to securely restrain the wire.
- Regarding claim 7, Hammerly further discloses that the said base is an elongate extruded metal part (column 1, lines 50-52) generally U-shaped in transverse section, said base having opposing legs (11) extending from the bottom of the base, said the legs of the base having opposing inner surfaces formed with grooves (figure 3).
- Regarding claim 8, Hammerly further discloses that the said body is an elongate extruded metal part (column 1, lines 52-54), and wherein the body has sides formed with tongues slidably receivable in the grooves in the legs of the base (figure 3).

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- Regarding claim 9, Spencer et al. further disclose that the power line connector subassemblies, socket connectors and neutral-ground connector subassembly are mounted on a common support (12) adapted to be installed in said meter box.
- Regarding claim 10, Hammerly further discloses that the base is generally L-shaped (c-section in figure 4) and said connector body is generally L-shaped (a straight c-section along direction 4 shown in figure 4, through '19' will show the L-shaped c-section with '19' forming one leg and '18' forming the other).
- Regarding claim 11, Hammerly further discloses that the said base has a first leg (horizontal part in figure 4) forming the bottom of the base and a second leg (vertical part) extending from the first leg, and wherein the connector body has a first leg (horizontal part of body in figure 4, i.e. c-section of '18') spaced from and opposing the first leg of the base and a second leg (c-section of '18') spaced from and opposing the second leg of the base, said first and second legs of the base and the first and second legs of the connector body defining a cavity for receiving said neutral conductor.
- Regarding claim 12, Hammerly further discloses that the second leg of the base has a sliding connection with the first leg of the connector body (column 2, lines 60-65; figure 4).

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- Regarding claim 13, Hammerly further discloses that the hole for receiving said ground conductor is located in the first leg of the connector body.
- Regarding claim 36, Spencer et al. disclose a socket assembly for mounting an electric meter in a meter box, comprising a plurality of power line connector subassemblies (32, 34) for connecting electric power conductors (column 2, lines 65-71) of a power line system to the socket assembly, a plurality of socket connectors (44, 46) for receiving mating connectors of the electric meter (column 3, lines 5-10), and a neutral-ground connector subassembly (29). Spencer et al. does not disclose any of the details of the neutral ground connector subassembly. Hammerly discloses a connector assembly with a neutral-ground connector sub assembly (figure 2) comprising a base (9) having a bottom (12) for supporting at least one neutral conductor of said power line system, a neutral-ground connector (made up of 13, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 22) comprising a body (13, 16, 17, 18, and 19) engageable with the base to mount the body on the base in a position in which a first substantially planar face of the body faces toward the bottom of the base and a second substantially planar face of the body opposite the first face faces away from the bottom of the base, a first screw opening (opening of screw 29) through said body extending from the first face of the body to the second face of the body, a hole in the

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body (hole in '19') for receiving a ground conductor (6) of the socket assembly, and a second screw opening (13a and mating hole in 19) intersecting said hole in the body (see figure 3), said hole in the body being disposed between said second face of the body and the bottom of the base when the body is mounted on the base, a first screw (29) threadable in said first screw opening to a position in which the screw is adapted to contact said at least one neutral conductor on the bottom of the base, and a second screw (20) threadable in said second screw opening to a position in which the second screw is adapted to contact said ground conductor (6). At the time of the invention it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to incorporate the neutral-ground connector sub assembly taught by Hammerly in the socket assembly disclosed by Spencer et al. to provide an inexpensive means of providing a common junction point for multiple ground or neutral wires (Hammerly, column 1, lines 15-40).

***Allowable Subject Matter***

Claims 37 and 38 objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Prior art Hammerly, relied on to reject claim

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36 disclose a socket body of multiple parts. Hammerly's socket body would not work as disclosed if it were made of one piece construction.

Claims 39-41 are allowed.


The following is a statement of reasons for the indication of allowable subject matter: Prior art does not disclose a neutral ground connector of an electric meter with the structure described in claim 39 (and 36+37) which has a one-piece body.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Biju Chandran whose telephone number is (571) 272-5953. The examiner can normally be reached on 8AM - 5PM. Mon-Fri.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Lynn Feild can be reached on (571) 272-2092. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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